

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5309

S E C R E T CAIRO 7170

EXDIS

FOR UNDERSECRETARY SISCO FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, EG

SUBJECT: PORT SAID MINE CLEARANCE

REF: CAIRO 6678

1. AS I WAS LEAVING THE PRESIDENT THIS EVENING, VP MOBARUK AND FAHMY BOTH TACKLED ME ABOUT WHEN US NAVY HELP MAY BE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE TO BEGIN WORK WITH THE EGYPTIAN NAVY ON CLEARING THE PORT SAID MINES. FAHMY RECALLED HIS LETTER TO ME REQUESTING SUCH HELP AND THE FACT THAT WE HAD AGREED LAST AUTUMN TO ASSIST IN SUCH A MISSION. IT IS A MATTER OF SOME URGENCY, FAHMY INSISTED, THAT THIS MINE CLEARANCE MISSION BE UNDERTAKEN. HE URGED AN EXPEDITIOUS AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE BE GIVEN. I TOLD HIM IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE REQUEST IS CURRENTLY BEING PROCESSED. I HOPED TO BE ABLE TO GIVE HIM A DEFINITIVE ANSWER SOON. SADAT ALSO INDICATED HIS DESIRE TO HAVE THE JOB DONE QUICKLY.

2. COMMENT: THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF THESE MINE FIELDS ON SUEZ CANAL TRAFFIC HAS OBVIOUSLY BECOME A SPUR TO THE EGYPTIANS TO GET ON WITH THE JOB. THE RECENT NECHES INCIDENT UNDERSCORED THE DANGER TO NAVIGATION POSED BY THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THESE MINE FIELDS. HAVING COMMITTED OURSELVES TO DO THE JOB LAST AUTUMN, I RECOMMEND WE GIVE EGYPTIANS AFFIRMATIVE REPLY ASAP SO THAT AN ADVANCE NAVY TEAM CAN COME OUT TO DO PRELIMINARY PLANNING WITH THE EGYPTIAN NAVY. WHILE I UNDERSTAND THERE MAY BE SOME CONCERN ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL

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REACTION, I ALSO GATHER THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST

IN THE NECHES INCIDENT. CANNOT THIS CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN THE
NECHES CASE BE USED TO IMPRESS UPON THE CONGRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF
OUR ASSISTING THE EGYPTIANS WITH THIS MISSION? IT IS BOTH A BOON
TO INTERNATIONAL NAVIGATION AND TO PEACE IN THE AREA. IF ANY
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS NEEDED, PLEASE ADVISE.
EILTS

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